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BEHEMOTH

- Loch Ness: The sightings listed in last Bilk can also be found in Fortean Times 91, p. 8 (8 March 1996, Jimmy Burnett; 16. April 1996, Bill Kinder; 13 June 1996, Kate Munro)

A new photo of Nessie has been taken by Austin Hepburn on August 11, 1996, at 4pm. According to an article in the "Daily Mail", September 5, 1996, p. 19 (send in by Peter T. Massaro) "After spotting a sudden disturbance on the water, (Hepburn) managed to shoot off six frames from about three-quarters of a mile away before the phenomenon faded. He had stopped his car on the loch's eastern shore near the village of Dores. 'The surface of the loch was like a mirror,' the 47-year-old art teacher from Inverness said yesterday. 'Then I saw this baffling movement in the water. It lasted only about four minutes, and was travelling north at little more than walking pace. I thought at one stage I could see something solid. Now, when I look through a magnifying glass at one of the pictures I can make out two black humps.'" The photo shows a V-wake, and the whole story was also covered by the "Welt", 6 September 1996, p. 12.

A second new photo of the Loch Ness Monster was a hoax. It shows a tail-like appendage coming out of the water, and was printed in the CENAP Report 235, September 1996, p. 28; it was taken from the tabloid "tz", 9. August 1996. Allegedly, Michael Westermann saw "the tail of the creature just 300 metres from our boat". The paper, in closing, points out that it is only a stick protruding over the water - a simple hoax to poke fun at Nessie sightings.

The Nessie movie has started screening in Germany, so far with worst reviews imaginable, and not yet reached my local cinema. (Süddeutsche Zeitung, September 26, 1996, p. 18; Stadtanzeiger Neustadt, 26 September 1996; Wochenblatt Ludwigshafen, 25 September 1996)

- Lake Toplitz, Austria: This lake is fabled for Nazi gold allegedly hidden there, also, some years ago, tabloid papers reported that a 7m/20ft unidentified worm-like monster lives there (more on this in my book: Trolle, Yetis, Tatzelwürmer). These hoaxes might have been the reason why the German TV programme "Verstehen Sie Spaß?", hosted by Dieter Hallervorden, arranged a new hoax there. They made a crocodile-like plastic monster with two horns, sank it on the lake bottom, and made a hazy video sequence of it attacking two scientists, Prof. Dr. Morris Scott and a colleague, from the "Royal Aquanaut Society". The two "scientists" (actually actors) explained they had been attacked by "a new and previously unknown species" while diving in the lake, and that the creature had bitten off their camera cable. "Verstehen Sie Spaß?" produced additional witnesses, diver Nicole Fink and a friend, who had also allegedly seen it, while the "scientists" claimed that years ago a cow carcass had been discovered in the lake, together with shark-like teeth. Even publican Albert Sienn said some of his patrons had reported sightings to him. The press conference of the "scientists" and "Witnesses" triggered research by Austrian TV's "Willkommen in Österreich" news magazine, who found out there was no such organisation as the "Royal Aquanaut Society". The interesting hoax was shown on German TV on October 12, 1996. "Verstehen Sie Spaß?" had, in 1976, also done a hoax in Lake Lucerne, which had succeeded into fooling people to believe in a monster there - including the interesting fact that people recalled earlier sightings!

- Bibliography: Discussion on alleged video of dinosaur in Lake Tele; veteran researcher Bill Gibbons thinks it shows two people in a boat (Fortean Times 91, p. 52) ● Strange photo of serpentine

creature from Guatemala with only the vaguest of detail, in Strange 17, p. 3 • ptrodactyls alive in Africa? Heuvelmans with a piece of "scientific cryptozoology" in Strange 17, p. 18 • The Clear Lake, California, monster fish from October 1993 identified as catfish, Strange 17, p. 23 • Teggie, migo, French cave painting and other "scientific" cryptozoology by Karl P. N. Shuker in Strange 17, p. 25. Shuker certainly has problems with cryptozoology, to show that it really works he claims that newly discovered animals never before seen belong to CZ, and so has a fabulous track record for that pseudoscience which - to this date - has not produced a single piece of evidence for any of the nonsense creatures it constantly invents and identifies. • Argentinian lake monsters in Fortean Times 92, p. 28 • videotape of Lake Storsjon monster, Sweden, taken by Gun-Britt Widmark, looks like a simple boat wake (Fortean Times 92, p. 18) • strange bones at the bottom of Loch Morar, identified as deer (Fortean Times 92, p. 18)

ISIS

- Lake Tanganyika: The Mambu Mutu, the crocodile man, is a lake monster with a fish tail and a human body. Carlos Bonet, a zoologist from Spain, believes the creature is not a sea cow, but a giant otter. (Strange 17, p. 37) This is where CZ starts to become ridiculous, as is so often the case. Nobody has ever suggested the Zennor mermaid is an unidentified species of otter. Perhaps Bonet should help identify the next case, which does not sound like a giant otter to me. But cryptozoologists can work marvels, and maybe they can identify it as well:
- Xlendi Bay, Malta: In a letter to the editor, Ian Skinner recalls a sighting he had in Malta while diving in a depth of 72 metres on August 23, 1971. There he saw "a very beautiful young woman, tall and slim... She was dressed in what looked like a white Indian sari; she wore sandals." (Fortean Times 92, p. 51) I'd identify this as a typical example of Hydrogyna boneti, or Bonet's mermaid. Certainly it is no giant otter, but could she not be a relative of the crocodile man?

LEVIATHAN

- Giant conger: A 2.8 metre/9 ft conger eel was caught off the Dutch town of Schotland in February 1996 (Infos and picture in Fortean Times 91, p. 10)
- Malaysia: Contrary to earlier reports, remains of the Malaysian "sea monster" have been preserved, according to Fortean Times 91, p. 15.

KRAKEN

- News on the expeditions to catch giant squids off New Zealand: Strange 17, p. 37.

CRYPTOZOOLOGY

- Loch Ness big cat: From a letter by Tony Sandy to me, May 12, 1996: "When I was at Strone, overlooking the castle (i.e. Urquhart Castle), I was witness however to another phenomenon that I heard and my landlady, Val Moffatt actually saw - an alien big cat (her dog Benji actually ran after it when she saw it in the garden). Last year there were numerous other sightings in the area because of the severe winter and these mystery beasts are thought to live in Cannich nearby, extending their hunting area further up the valley when conditions make game scarce."

MARINE LIFE

- A 12 metre whale stranded on September 1st 1996 at Whangarei, New Zealand (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 3 September 1996, p. 9) -- A young humped backed whale has been pushed back to sea after it got entangled in a shark net off Australia's Gold Coast (Frankfurter Rundschau, 18 October 1996, p.28)